



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes World TB Day

BISMARCK, N.D. – March 24, 2008 is the 26th annual World TB Day, according to Rachel Birk, tuberculosis coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health. Established by the World Health Organization in 1982, World TB Day is intended to raise awareness of the devastating health and economic consequences of tuberculosis disease.

The 2008 World TB Day theme promoted by the World Health Organization is *I am stopping TB*. According to Birk, this day is a reminder that TB can be eliminated by ensuring that those who are at risk for getting TB are appropriately tested and treated. Those at risk for getting TB include people from countries where TB is common and people who live or work in residential group settings, such as prisons and nursing homes.

In 2006, the U.S. reported 4.6 cases of TB disease for every 100,000 people and a total of 646 deaths. These statistics are dramatically lower than in 1953 when TB surveillance began. According to Birk, however, this does not mean that the disease is gone.

“North Dakota sees an average of seven cases of active TB per year, which is well below the national average,” Birk said. “However, this does not mean that North Dakota residents should ignore TB. Although it is still out there, we have the power to eliminate it.”

Symptoms of TB disease include a cough that lasts more than three weeks, night sweats, unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite, and fatigue. The Department of Health recommends that anyone experiencing these symptoms should be evaluated by a physician immediately.

For information about tuberculosis, call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180 or visit the TB program website at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/tb/.

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